16

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A system for providing visualization of market offers, comprising a computer system operable to:

receive offer data for a plurality of offers, the received offer data reflecting values specified in the offers for a plurality of offer variables; and

generate a display of the received offer data, the display comprising a plurality of patterns, each pattern representing a particular offer and comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to a predefined encoding scheme, a value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar.

2.   The system of Claim 1, wherein the scheme is selected such that a set of geometric display elements encoding a first value of a first offer variable in a first pattern associated with a first offer are readily visually distinguishable from a set of geometric display elements encoding a second value of the first offer variable in a second pattern associated with a second offer if the first value is not substantially similar to the second value.

3.   The system of Claim 1, wherein

the sets of geometric display elements encode associated values according to a predefined color scheme; and

each geometric display element in a set of geometric display elements has a color according to the value being represented and the scheme for encoding the value in the set of geometric display elements, the color for a particular geometric display element possibly being different than the colors of other geometric display elements in the same set of geometric display elements.

17

4.   The system of Claim 1, wherein the user is a buyer and the offers comprise asks only from sellers on an approved vendor list (AVL).

5.   The system of Claim 1, wherein a value encoded in a set of geometric display elements comprises a range of values within a range of possible values.

6.   The system of Claim 1, wherein the bars are columns.

7.   The system of Claim 1, wherein the computer system is operable to:
        access a user request, the user request comprising a plurality of entered values for a plurality of offer variables; and
        generate within the display a pattern representing the user request, the pattern for the user request comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to the predefined scheme, an entered value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar, such that a user may compare the pattern for the user request with the patterns for one or more offers in connection with a market decision.

8.   The system of Claim 7, where the computer system is operable to:
        receive a selection of a particular pattern associated with a particular offer;
        receive an instruction to generate an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern;
        in response to receiving the instruction, automatically generate an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern; and
        communicate the generated order for matching with the selected offer.

18

9.   The system of Claim 8, wherein the computer system is operable to display the values specified in the user request and the values specified in the offer associated with the selected pattern to allow the user to compare these values before providing an instruction to generate an order.

10.　A method of providing visualization of market offers, comprising:

receiving offer data for a plurality of offers, the received offer data reflecting values specified in the offers for a plurality of offer variables; and

generating a display of the received offer data, the display comprising a plurality of patterns, each pattern representing a particular offer and comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to a predefined encoding scheme, a value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar.

11.　The method of Claim 10, wherein the scheme is selected such that a set of geometric display elements encoding a first value of a first offer variable in a first pattern associated with a first offer are readily visually distinguishable from a set of geometric display elements encoding a second value of the first offer variable in a second pattern associated with a second offer if the first value is not substantially similar to the second value.

12.　The method of Claim 10, wherein

the sets of geometric display elements encode associated values according to a predefined color scheme; and

each geometric display element in a set of geometric display elements has a color according to the value being represented and the scheme for encoding the value in the set of geometric display elements, the color for a particular geometric display element possibly being different than the colors of other geometric display elements in the same set of geometric display elements.

13.　The method of Claim 10, wherein the user is a buyer and the offers comprise asks only from sellers on an approved vendor list (AVL).

14.   The method of Claim 10, wherein a value encoded in a set of geometric display elements comprises a range of values within a range of possible values.

15.   The method of Claim 10, wherein the bars are columns.

16.   The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

accessing a user request, the user request comprising a plurality of entered values for a plurality of offer variables; and

generating within the display a pattern representing the user request, the pattern for the user request comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to the predefined scheme, an entered value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar, such that a user may compare the pattern for the user request with the patterns for one or more offers in connection with a market decision.

17.   The method of Claim 16, further comprising:

receiving a selection of a particular pattern associated with a particular offer;

receiving an instruction to generate an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern;

in response to the instruction, automatically generating an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern; and

communicating the generated order for matching with the selected offer.

18.   The method of Claim 17, further comprising displaying the values specified in the user request and the values specified in the offer associated with the selected pattern to allow the user to compare these values before providing an instruction to generate an order.

21

19.   Software for providing visualization of market offers, the software being embodied in computer-readable media and when executed operable to:

receive offer data for a plurality of offers, the received offer data reflecting values specified in the offers for a plurality of offer variables; and

5   generate a display of the received offer data, the display comprising a plurality of patterns, each pattern representing a particular offer and comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to a predefined encoding scheme, a value for the offer variable

10   corresponding to the bar.

20.   The software of Claim 19, wherein the scheme is selected such that a set of geometric display elements encoding a first value of a first offer variable in a first pattern associated with a first offer are readily visually distinguishable from a set

15   of geometric display elements encoding a second value of the first offer variable in a second pattern associated with a second offer if the first value is not substantially similar to the second value.

21.   The software of Claim 19, wherein

20   the sets of geometric display elements encode associated values according to a predefined color scheme; and

each geometric display element in a set of geometric display elements has a color according to the value being represented and the scheme for encoding the value in the set of geometric display elements, the color for a particular geometric display

25   element possibly being different than the colors of other geometric display elements in the same set of geometric display elements.

22.   The software of Claim 19, wherein the user is a buyer and the offers comprise asks only from sellers on an approved vendor list (AVL).

23.   The software of Claim 19, wherein a value encoded into a set of geometric display elements comprises a range of values within a range of possible values.

24.   The software of Claim 19, wherein the bars are columns.

25.   The software of Claim 19, further operable to:

access a user request, the user request comprising a plurality of entered values for a plurality of offer variables; and

generate within the display a pattern representing the user request, the pattern for the user request comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to the predefined scheme, an entered value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar, such that a user may compare the pattern for the user request with the patterns for one or more offers in connection with a market decision.

26.   The software of Claim 25, further operable to:

receive a selection of a particular pattern associated with a particular offer;

receive an instruction to generate an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern;

in response to receiving the instruction, automatically generate an order based on the values for the offer associated with the selected pattern; and

communicate the generated order for matching with the selected offer.

23

27.   The software of Claim 26, further operable to display the values specified in the user request and the values specified in the offer associated with the selected pattern to allow the user to compare these values before providing an instruction to generate an order.

24

28.   A system for providing visualization of market offers, comprising:

means for receiving offer data for a plurality of offers, the offer data reflecting values specified in the offers for a plurality of offer variables; and

means for generating a display of the offer data, the display comprising a plurality of patterns, each pattern representing a particular offer and comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to a predefined encoding scheme, a value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar.

25

29.   A system for providing visualization of market offers, comprising a computer system operable to:

receive offer data for a plurality of offers, the received offer data reflecting values specified in the offers for a plurality of offer variables; and

5   generate a display of the received offer data, the display comprising a plurality of patterns, each pattern representing a particular offer and comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that collectively encode, according to a predefined color scheme, a value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar, the scheme

10   being selected such that a set of geometric display elements encoding a first value of a first offer variable in a first pattern associated with a first offer are readily visually distinguishable from a set of geometric display elements encoding a second value of the first offer variable in a second pattern associated with a second offer if the first value is not substantially similar to the second value;

15   access a user request, the user request comprising a plurality of entered values for a plurality of offer variables; and

generate within the display a pattern representing the user request, the pattern for the user request comprising a plurality of bars, each bar representing a particular offer variable and comprising a set of one or more geometric display elements that by

20   virtue of their appearance collectively encode, according to the color scheme, an entered value for the offer variable corresponding to the bar, such that a user may compare the pattern for the user request with the patterns for one or more offers in connection with a market decision.